

Jesus temptation in the Wilderness: Godly Play

Story based on Matthew 4.1-11 and Luke 4.1-13

Props: *A large piece of brown/beige fabric, sand, some stones, a small cardboard box to represent the temple. A small figure to represent Jesus. Make the sand into a mound to represent the high mountain. (Personally, I would not have a figure to represent the devil- it is unclear from the biblical account whether the devil appeared as a visible person or as a voice) Use the props to bring the story to life as you tell it.*

You might want to explain the term 'scripture' before you tell this story. Jesus was referring to the Hebrew or Jewish scriptures, which now form the Old Testament part of the Christian Bible.

Jesus had just been baptised by John in the River Jordan. He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. What was the wilderness like? It was a place that was wild and lonely. There were no people or houses or roads or shops there. It was quiet, except for the calls of wild animals, and the wind whistling through the sparse trees.

Jesus went there alone. I wonder why? He was there for a long, long time- 40 days and 40 nights! I wonder what he did, what he thought about for all that time? He prayed to his Father. He thought about the life that lay ahead of him. He didn't eat- anything! How did he do that? Didn't he get hungry?

Yes, he did. After 40 days and nights alone in the wilderness without any food, Jesus was very hungry.

And then came a voice, a presence, a person alongside him. But not a friend. No, not a friend. The enemy. The adversary. The devil.

'Are you really the Son of God?' asked the voice. 'Really? Because if you really are, show your power by turning these stones into bread!'

Jesus looked at the stones. He felt the hollowness in his stomach. He knew who he was. He knew he had the power. He was tempted. But he also knew his Father's will.

"The scriptures say, 'A person does not live only by eating bread'" replied Jesus. I wonder what he meant?

Then the devil led him up a high mountain, from where they could see all the kingdoms of the world.

'All this is mine!' said the devil. 'All of it! And I can give it all to you if I choose- would you like it? All you have to do is bow down and worship me!'

Jesus was tempted. To be a great King over all the Earth- who wouldn't want that? I wonder what you would have done?

But Jesus replied, 'The scripture says, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only. No. My answer is no.'

Then the devil led Jesus to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem. He said to him 'Are you really God's son? Does he really care about you? Why not find out for sure- throw yourself off this building, because the Scripture says that he will protect you and stop you from being hurt. Why not try it out, if it's really true!' Jesus was tempted. Did God really care that much about him? Was he truly loved by his Father?

But he knew what he had to do. 'No!' he replied. 'The scriptures say 'do not test the Lord your God', and I will not do it!'

Then the devil left him. He had not won. Jesus had been tempted and tested, but he had not given in. His real work on earth was about to begin.